

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 IO-12

DPW-01 AID-20 SSO-00 NSCE-00 RSR-01 /114 W

----- 064154

R 301105 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9407

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANAG

USDEL FRANCE

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5292

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT VS

SUBJECT: THIEU REMOVES THREE PROVINCE CHIEFS ON CORRUPTION CHARGES

REF: NHA TRANG 335, RPTD SAIGON 5139 TO SECSTATE AND USDEL

1. PRESIDENT THIEU MAR 27 SIGNED A DECREE REMOVING THREE PROVINCE CHIEFS ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE INSPECTORATE, AFTER AN INVESTIGATION OF CORRUPTION CHARGES AGAINST THEM. THE THREE AFFECTED ARE LTC NGUYEN VAN NGHIEM (PHU BON PROVINCE), LTC NGUYEN VAN TO (PHU YEN PROVINCE), AND LTC TRAN DINH BICH (PHUOC TUY PROVINCE). NGHIEM WAS " DISCHARGED" FROM ALL POSITIONS IN THE TOUGHEST PENALTY OF THE THREE; TO WAS " RELIEVED" OF ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES, A LESS SEVERE ACTION; BICH WAS " SUSPENDED" PENDING INVESTIGATION. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REMOVALS DID NOT SPECIFY THE WRONG- DOINGS

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INVOLVED, BUT IT NOTED THAT THIEU HAD ALSO ASKED VICE PRESIDENT HUONG TO START A DEEPER INVESTIGATION OF THESE THREE CASES FOR POSSIBLE COURT ACTION.

2. CONGEN NHA TRANG HAS REPORTED (REFTTEL) THAT MONTAGNARD LEADERS HAD DEMANDED NGHIUM' S REMOVAL FOR SOME TIME. THEY HAD COMPLAINED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, ABOUT CORRUPTION, APPARENTLY WITH SOME JUSTIFICATION. THE CONGEN IS LESS SURE THAT CHARGES AGAINST TO ARE SUBSTANTIAL, AND COMMENTS THAT IN ANY CASE THERE IS PROBABLY GREATER WRONG- DOING ELSEWHERE IN MR 2 NOT YET TOUCHED.

3. BICH' S LIST OF ALLEGED VENALITIES INCLUDES MANY SEPARATE ITEMS. ACCORDING TO MAJ GEN NGUYEN VAN HIEU, ASSISTANT TO VICE PRESIDENT HUONG FOR CORRUPTION INVESTIGATIONS, THE MOST SERIOUS OF THESE IS A CHARGE THAT HE COLLUDED WITH A GROUP ESCORTING DRAFT- AGE YOUTHS FROM SAIGON, DOWN THE SAIGON RIVER, THROUGH THE PORT OF VUNG TAU, AND OUT TO INTERNATIONAL WATERS WHERE THE YOUTHS WERE TRANSFERRED TO MERCHANT VESSELS BOUND FOR HONG KONG. MOST BUT NOT ALL OF THESE YOUTHS WERE ETHNIC CHINESE. THE RING INCLUDED VIETNAMESE NAVAL OFFICERS AND VIETNAMESE NAVAL SHIPS WERE USED, ACCORDING TO HIEU. HIEU SAID THAT SEPARATE ACTION IS BEING TAKEN AGAINST THE NAVAL OFFICERS INVOLVED. OTHER ALLEGATIONS AGAINST BICH, AS REPORTED BY THE POLOFF IN PHUOC TUY, ARE THAT HE (A) DEMANDED MONEY FROM VILLAGE AND HAMLET OFFICIALS WHO WISHED TO KEEP THEIR JOBS UNDER DECREE 120, (B) ARRANGED RF AND PF ASSIGNMENTS TO VUNG TAU IN RETURN FOR MONEY, AND (C) ALTERED TAXES ON BUSINESSES ILLEGALLY FOR PERSONAL GAIN. THE POLOFF' S REPORT ALSO SUGGESTS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION MAY BE DISSATISFIED WITH BICH FOR POLITICAL REASONS, FROM SLOWNESS IN PUSHING THE DEMOCRACY PARTY TO ALLEGED FACTIONAL ACTIVITIES AGAINST THIEU.
BENNETT

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